



Transportation Safety Commission City of Harrisonburg, Virginia

TO: Transportation Safety Commission Members, Council members, City Manager Kurt Hodgen, Assistant City Manager Evan Vass

FROM: Andrew D. Williams, AICP, Assistant Director of Public Works

DATE: November 16, 2009

RE: Transportation Safety Commission Minutes from November 10, 2009 Meeting

The Transportation Safety Commission met on Tuesday November 10, at the Department of Planning & Community Development, 409 S Main Street.

Members and Advisory Members present included: Bill Blessing (Chair), Len VanWyk (Citizen), Doug Stader (DMV), Officer Greg Deeds (Police), Diane Roll (Police), Drew Williams (Public Works), Brad Reed (Public Works), Lee Eschelman (JMU), Reggie Smith (Transit).

Guests Present include: None.

Citizens are always provided the opportunity to voice their views/concerns about any item before the commission. It is the policy of the Commission to move the agenda item to the beginning of the meeting when citizens attend Commission meetings to avoid detaining citizens for the entire meeting. However, any citizen is welcome to stay for the entire meeting.

Welcome

1. Officer Deeds noted that he had recently attended a conference where information for Road Safety Audits was available. Ofc. Deeds distributed information about the program and noted it was free to perform the audit. Staff noted they would look into the program to determine application requirements and report back at the next Safety Commission Meeting.
2. Special Presentation – Officer Deeds noted that Sgt. Keller was unavailable to present today and would plan to do so at the next Commission meeting.

3. Franklin & Ott St - Update

Public Works Department has been requested through neighborhood residents and Councilman Byrd to study whether a four-way stop condition is warranted at the intersection of Franklin & Ott Sts. Public Works staff has conducted a study and found that warrants for a four-way stop sign are not satisfied. Mr. Williams reviewed with the Commission that in accordance with MUTCD Section 2B.07 and all-way stop control is not warranted. The Commission agreed with staff's findings.

4. South Main St & Pointe Dr. - Update

Mr. Williams reviewed with the Commission a request from a citizen to install a traffic signal at South Main Street and Pointe Drive. Staff has conducted a warrant study and found that a traffic signal is not warranted at this location due to low traffic volumes on the side street and minimal crash data. The study was performed in accordance with MUTCD's warrant requirements. Not all warrants are required to be met to install a traffic signal, however, in this case, no warrants were met at this time. Consequently, staff has reviewed crash data for the past year. There have been three reported accidents, all of which have occurred between September 2009 and November 2009. All accidents occurred between 1 PM and 5 PM a traffic signal would not have helped to prevent two of them. Mr. Williams all three had been caused by drivers 17 and younger. Mr. Smith inquired if a stoplight would be installed in conjunction with the Southbury Station development. Mr. Williams noted that Pointe Drive is not aligned with Boxwood Ct. on the opposite side of Main Street. In plans reviewed by staff, Boxwood Court was intended only to serve emergency vehicles and not day to day traffic related to the development. The Commission took no further action on this item.

5. Grace & High St.

Mr. Eshelman presented findings of a study that was conducted in the last month. Mr. Eshelman observed pedestrians crossing mid-block on Grace Street. The study also focused on how pedestrians utilize the signalized intersection of Grace Street & High Street. The prevailing two destinations for pedestrians (primarily students) is Memorial Hall to the west and the Quad to the east. It was observed that pedestrians primarily utilize the east-west crosswalk on the north side of the intersection alone. Pedestrians do not use the north-south crosswalk on the east side of the intersection at all – this is a result most likely, due to the geometric configuration of the intersection. Mr. Blessing recommended staff consider a diagonal crosswalk at Grace & High. Staff pointed out that due to considerably low traffic volumes on Grace Street, pedestrians are crossing whenever is convenient and there is a break in the traffic. Placing a diagonal crosswalk would most likely not encourage pedestrians to remain on the south side of Grace Street. Mr. Reed stated that a diagonal crosswalk would require an exclusive pedestrian phase at the signal and implementing this change would create signal coordination issues with High Street & Cantrell Avenue. Mr. Williams stated that there are two issues that need to be addressed separately:

1. Students crossing mid-block
2. Safety considerations for pedestrians at the intersection of High Street & Grace Street.

The first issue will be difficult to correct. As shown in Mr. Eshelman's pictures, students are crossing Grace Street at numerous locations. There is not one place to install a mid-block crosswalk that would be used by pedestrians. The second issue however, can be considered with changes to the intersection. Staff recommended modifying the signal configuration on Grace Street so that it will be split-phased. This will minimize the opportunity for vehicles to proceed through the intersection unaware of pedestrians. The Commission also requested that staff look at placement of the crosswalk and to consider either relocating the crosswalks on the north and east side of the intersection or to modify them to a larger size. They currently meet further north of the intersection. Mr. Williams stated this was likely due to a drop inlet for storm drainage, but that staff would review and report back at the December meeting.

New Business

6. Fairway Drive – speeding and cut-through concerns.

City staff has been contacted by a resident on Fairway Drive with speeding and cut-through concerns. Staff is in the process of conducting a study to determine what speeds and volumes of traffic are on Fairway Drive. Ms. Thanh Dang has been working with the resident and may be attending a Homeowners' Association meeting this evening to receive more input from the neighborhood. Staff will report back in December regarding its findings.

7. Transportation Enhancement Grant – Downtown Streetscape

The City of Harrisonburg – with the help of the Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission – is preparing a grant submission for Phase II of the downtown streetscape project. This will include reconstructing sidewalk on the west side of Main Street between Bruce Street and Elizabeth Street, except for sidewalk on Court Square. The original estimate for this work is approximately \$875,000. Grants are due December 1. Mr. Williams stated that he anticipates the Commonwealth Transportation Board to approve applications at the March or April meeting, but if approved, funds would not be available until the 2011 construction season.

Other Business

1. Mr. Williams noted that the Department is currently constructing sidewalks on East Gay Street between Broad Street and Sterling Street. It is anticipated that this work will be completed in early 2010. Funds are through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program.
2. Mr. Williams updated the Commission on replacement of the traffic signal at Grace Street and Main Street. In August, the signals governing northbound traffic were removed as a result of an accident. A temporary signal has been installed in the interim. The City is working on plans for replacement in conjunction with the South Main Street Median project which may begin next summer. Staff will present this project to the Commission at the December meeting.

3. Mr. Williams noted that the Department has been in the process of installing lit street signs at numerous intersections over the last few weeks. They are currently at the intersections of South Main & Port Republic Road, Devon Lane & Port Republic Road and Cantrell Avenue & South Main. The Department is working on the remaining Port Republic Road intersections and will be installing them in the coming month. These should assist motorists and pedestrians alike, particularly at night and for many users visiting our community. The Department will be working towards installation at all signalized intersection on major corridors in the coming years.
4. Mr. Williams brought to the Commission's attention that the City has recently prohibited escorting oversize/overheight loads through the City. Mr. Williams explained that there are two low bridges on the Interstate that necessitate these loads to come through town on Route 11 – Smithland Road Bridge and Stone Spring Road Bridge. The Stone Spring Road bridge will be replaced with the City's project in the coming years. In many cases, Public Works crews are required to assist in escorts and adjusting traffic signals to allow the loads to proceed through intersections. City police are also involved in the escorts. These activities have impeded staff time working on regularly scheduled maintenance activities and the Department no longer has resources to accommodate loads. The City has notified the Department of Motor Vehicles which is the permitting agency that it can no longer manage oversize loads within the corporate limits of Harrisonburg, and that they need to find an alternate route.
5. Mr. Doug Stader noted that the Click-It or Ticket program will be in full force the week of November 23 through the 29.

NEXT MEETING TUESDAY December 1, 2009 AT 8:30AM at Community Development Classroom, 409 S Main Street.